

*Alone in  
the Night*

For Tom

# Chapter One



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“Jasmine! Hurry up! You’re going to be late for school!” Jasmine’s mum glanced at her watch – and then at all the other children wearing the same uniform as her daughter, who were streaming past the end of their road.

Jasmine looked up. “Oh, but, I was just saying hello to Tiger, Mum!” The marmalade tabby cat sitting on the wall

ducked his head so Jasmine could rub his ears. Then he stood up and leaned over to bump the side of his head against her chin. Jasmine had read lots of books about cats and knew that he wasn't just being cute. He was rubbing his scent glands on her. It was pretty cute, too, though. All the cats in the street loved Jasmine – which is why it always took her so long to get to school.

“Jasmine, we left the house ten minutes ago and we haven't even got past next door!” Her mum sighed. “You're going to be *late*.”

“Sorry, Mum.” Jasmine smiled at her apologetically. “Let's run!”

She was just picking up her school bag when she stopped again. “Oh, Mum, look! In next door's window!”

She pointed across the garden.

“Oh, a kitten.”

“Mum! A *gorgeous* kitten! I haven't seen her before. Did you know the new people next door had a kitten?”

The kitten was tiny, perched right in the middle of the big window sill, which made her look tinier still. Jasmine could just about make out her beautiful stripy brown tabby markings.



“No, I didn’t,” Mum said, leading her away. Jasmine walked backwards, still staring at the kitten, who stared back. “You know we haven’t really said any more than a quick hello while they were unpacking.”

“Poor little kitten. They must have left her all alone while they’ve gone to work,” Jasmine said sadly.

“Oh, Jasmine! Cats don’t mind being on their own,” her mum laughed. “Besides, how do you even know that kitten’s a she? It could be a boy.”

“She just looked like a she,” Jasmine said. “And cats do get lonely, Mum, especially when they’re only babies.”

“I’m sure they’ll play with her when they get home,” Mum comforted her. “Now run!”



Jasmine turned out to be right – the kitten was a girl. Her mum invited Helen, the new lady next door, round for coffee, and found out all about her beautiful cat.

“She’s called Star,” Jasmine told her best friend Lara, as they walked home from school together. “She’s got such cute tabby stripes; she’s really gorgeous.” Jasmine sighed. “She looks exactly my dream cat – you know, the one I’d really like to have for my own some day.”

“Oh, you’re so lucky having her next door. She might come into your garden,” Lara said enviously. “Do you know how old she is?”

“Nearly three months. They were given her by a friend whose cat had kittens. They were a bit worried she’d be upset by the move, but she doesn’t mind. Except she’s desperate to go out!”

“Can’t they let her out?” Lara asked.

“Not until she’s had all her vaccinations in a couple of weeks’ time,” Jasmine explained. “See you tomorrow!” she called, as they got to her gate.



Over the next few weeks, Jasmine watched for Star every time she walked past the house next door and always waved hello. Sometimes, if she was sitting on the window sill, the little cat would stand up on her back legs and scrabble hopefully at the glass with her paws, as though she hoped she might be able to slip through and come out for Jasmine to stroke her. Jasmine wished she could, too.



Star finished her wash and looked thoughtfully round the garden. She still wasn’t very used to being outside. In fact, today was the first day that her owners had left her in the house with

the cat flap unlocked. She'd been allowed out all on her own a few times over the weekend, and they'd put out big bowls of cat crunchies to make sure she came back. Of course she had! She loved her house, and her basket, and her food bowls, and her people. Exploring was fun too, that was all.

She headed to the end of the garden. The brambles there were fascinating, full of nests and tunnels and hidey-holes. When she'd finally finished investigating and wriggled out again, her eyes were sparkling with excitement. She licked the fur round her mouth thoughtfully, trying to get rid of the rather strange taste of beetle. Beetles looked delicious, like walking cat crunchies, but they didn't taste good.

Star sat down in the middle of the lawn, closing her eyes for a moment and feeling the warm autumn sunshine on her fur. Then she went and rolled around in a pile of dried leaves. When she'd got bored of that game, she stretched out her front paws and then her back paws, and looked for something to do next. There was a snail moving very slowly along a leaf just next to her, and she watched that for a little while, but she'd learned from the beetle, and didn't try to eat it.

